
Prepared for

**Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Division of Transportation Investment Management
Bureau of Planning**

November 2002

Final Report

**Focus Groups
Concerning WisDOT Transportation Planning
Connections
2030**

Prepared by

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Under the Supervision of

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Interviews

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) commissioned two focus groups dealing with transportation planning in Wisconsin as part of the first phase of Connections 2030, WisDOT's long-range multimodal transportation plan. The first focus group involved WisDOT agency personnel; the second involved a group of external stakeholders.

These focus groups were intended to:

- Identify opinions, beliefs and attitudes on issues related to the Connections 2030 process;
- Elicit views on emerging trends and priorities to be addressed in the planning process;
- Assemble potential improvements in key planning and public involvement issues;
- Identify additional stakeholder audiences;
- Build interest, awareness and excitement about the planning process; and
- Build consensus and support among diverse stakeholder groups.

1.2 Process Overview

Wendy W. Blumenthal, Vice President Opinion and Market Research, Zigman Joseph Stephenson, facilitated both focus groups, under the supervision of Tries & Rice, LLC.

- Session 1: WisDOT personnel met at WisDOT's headquarters on October 9, 2002. The session ran from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- Session 2: Opinion leaders representing various transportation-related constituencies met on October 14, 2002 as a luncheon session (noon to 2:00 p.m.) in the conference room at the Wisconsin Department of Revenue office building.
- The facilitator used pre-approved discussion guides for each session (Appendices C & D).

1.3 Interviewees

The first focus group session participants were selected from the WisDOT Connections 2030 Steering Committee to provide an internal perspective on the long-range planning process. The second session participants were selected to represent (1) a cross-section of opinion and perspectives among those familiar with transportation issues in Wisconsin; (2) the key interest groups/players expected to play a significant role in the planning process; and (3) individuals representing traditionally underrepresented populations.

Participants in the second focus group were recruited from pre-selected lists of representatives of the following interest groups who received an invitation letter to participate (Appendix A):

- Airports
- Automobile Travel Association
- Bicycle Advocate
- Consulting Engineer
- Contractors/Road Builders
- Economic / Chamber Representative
- Elderly/Disabled Representative
- Environmental Advocacy Group
- Freight Rail Transit
- Labor
- Motor Freight Carrier
- Municipal / County Government Association
- Passenger Rail Advocate
- Port Authority
- Regional Planning Commission
- Rural/Local Roads Advocate
- Taxpayers Association
- Tourism Industry
- University Transportation Researchers
- Urban Welfare and Work Agency Administrator

While the participant list for each group (Appendix B) certainly does not include all key decision-makers members throughout the state, the pool of participants was designed to provide a reasonably representative group of individuals who meet these criteria. As one of the first steps in the public involvement process, the focus groups do not represent the last or the most far-reaching participation activity. Many more groups and

individuals will participate in and give input to the process in subsequent months of the planning process.

2.0 Summary & Findings

2.1 Overview of Results

While participants in each focus group had unique perspectives, there were a number of consistent themes heard in both sessions. These included:

- Major concern about Wisconsin's deteriorating transportation infrastructure and the availability of funds to repair and replace;
- Desire to find new funding alternatives for transportation, beyond the gas tax;
- Concern about the need for greater coordination between a state transportation plan and other areas that affect this plan, such as land use, environmental planning, local transportation plans, etc.;
- Call for the governor to take leadership role in transportation planning by articulating an overall vision for transportation in the state (with assistance from WisDOT) and/or acting as an arbiter to minimize conflicts between state departments and special interest groups;
- Develop non-traditional approaches to secure input from under-represented stakeholders; The recommended focus is outward, i.e., *"What are the needs and aspirations people have that can be addressed by transportation?"* rather than, *"What are our transportation system needs?"*

Among participants in the first session, a critical issue was insufficient definition of the objectives, content and desired outcomes / products of the long-range planning process.

External stakeholders, on the other hand, expressed concerns about *"controlling the impact of road builders"* in the planning process and increasing *"respect"* for modes of transportation other than the automobile.

2.2 Most Critical Transportation Issues

Both groups were asked to offer their ideas on the most critical transportation issues facing the state and then vote on the ideas mentioned. Although specific wording may have been different in each session, there was a great deal of consistency in the issues selected.

**Fig. 1: Critical Issues Identified by Participants
in Both Sessions**

<u>Critical Issue</u>	Votes Group #1	Votes Group #2	Total
Rebuilding Infrastructure (maintaining and enhancing the existing transportation system)	4	8	12
Transportation funding challenges	5	6	11
Transportation safety (enhancing the safety of our transportation system)	4	3	7
Investment management (choosing how to spend money)	5	--	5
Modal choice (improving / expanding the transportation options for state residents and business)	2	3	5
Aging of population/mobility needs (necessary enhancements to our transportation system needed to guarantee mobility of an aging population)	1	2	3
Highway capacity	3	--	3
Highway maintenance and operation	3	--	3
Meeting expectations regarding personal mobility	3	--	3
Environment / land use concerns (need to preserve and maintain natural / social environments while expanding / enhancing transportation system)	2	1	3

In addition to these issues, both sessions explored what other changes might occur during the next 25 years that would impact transportation planning. Among the topics raised:

- Funding crisis from reduced reliance on gasoline fuel, leading to a reduction in gas tax revenue;
- Increase in both truck and rail freight traffic;
- Growth in tourism in Wisconsin;
- Increasing urbanization;
- More multicultural issues and a growing bilingual population;
- Growing disconnect between where employment and employees are located;
- Difficulty preserving natural resources with increased demand;
- Impact of globalization;
- Possibility of a catastrophic occurrence; and
- Rapid changes in technology making 20 - 30 year planning cycles obsolete.

2.3 Recommendations to Ensure Effective Planning

At the conclusion of each session, participants were asked to offer their top recommendations regarding effective transportation planning, policy development and funding issues in Wisconsin. There were significant differences between the groups in these recommendations. Differences were generally based on the prior discussion and the experience of group participants.

WisDOT Staff

WisDOT staff generally focused on the process of planning. Suggestions included:

- Ensuring recommendations are data based;
- Including desired outcomes as part of plan recommendations;
- Managing expectations of public / legislature;
- Conducting a comprehensive debate on plan implementation;
- Focusing on how transportation affects the lives of state residents; and
- Utilizing stakeholder input to develop a shared vision across all modes.

External Stakeholders

The recommendations of opinion leaders often fell into the political arena. They suggested such things as:

- Reforming campaign finance laws to reduce special interest influence;
- Infusing WisDOT with new people who are not engineering/highway oriented;
- Broadening the base for transportation funding in the state (through such means as a sales tax for transportation, a massive gas tax increase or transferring auto-related sales tax monies into transportation);
- Decentralizing the planning process;
- Holding an interdisciplinary transportation summit; and
- Making it illegal for politicians to talk to planners.

3.0 Session 1: WisDOT Staff Focus Group Results

3.1 Major Findings and Observations

The themes dominating the discussion among WisDOT staff members participating in the first focus group session were:

- Grappling with the actual objectives and format of a transportation plan;
- Determining how to finance transportation;
- Assessing how dollars should be spent across various modal systems; and
- Replacing a deteriorating infrastructure.

Defining Connections 2030

The broad purpose of this session was to explore perceptions in such areas as identification of critical issues, balancing the interests of various groups and possible barriers to plan implementation. However, the results of the first session suggest that WisDOT personnel see an even more fundamental challenge as they begin the Connections 2030 process: determining the real objective of Connections 2030 and what the final product should look like or include. This topic, in fact, surfaced again and again during the discussion. As one person noted:

“(We need to do some) training so we can all know what we’re trying to accomplish. Are you trying to get more money? To balance transportation modes?”

In a discussion comparing the upcoming process to Translinks 21 (Wisconsin’s long-range transportation plan completed in 1994), several individuals stressed that the 1994 effort often focused on picking and choosing from funding different modes, but “you didn’t have to think about how it all went together.” Another person noted:

“We spent very little time focusing on the vision of what we were trying to accomplish. Instead we did program proposals. We need to portray what types of economic or social outcomes accrue from various types of investments. We’ve cast some new highway

construction in those terms, but we've not been successful in casting other areas."

WisDOT staff wrestled with this issue throughout their session. They suggested that Connections 2030 should emphasize not simply funding optimal needs within each mode, but providing indications of what various options might look like across modes at a fixed funding level. They stressed that these options should not only include dollar figures, but also attach projected outcomes showing what the funding level in a particular mode might mean for Wisconsin.

"You need to help the legislature understand what they are going to 'buy' with the dollars and what outcomes there will be."

Funding

Another theme in this session was the need to find alternative funding sources to help pay for transportation generally, as well as specifically for the aging infrastructure. The consensus was that current funding sources are likely to prove inadequate to meet the transportation demands of the state.

Incomplete Control

WisDOT staff also had many concerns about making decisions in areas where they did not have overall ownership. Examples included:

- Developing a statewide plan without control over local decisions;
- Having dollars flow through the department but not actually having control over how those dollars were spent; and
- Conflicts between state departments in areas such as land use or environmental issues; to keep conflicts between state departments from dominating the planning process, many felt the governor would need to be involved.

3.2 Most Critical Transportation Issues

In each session, each participant was asked to suggest the two or three most critical transportation issues facing Wisconsin. All participants then

voted on the top priorities. As the chart below showing suggestions and votes demonstrates, the issues of where the money will come from and how it would be spent dominate the top positions:

Fig. 2: Critical Issues Identified by WisDOT Session	
<u>Issues Suggested</u>	# of Votes
Transportation financing (local and state)	5
Investment management (choosing how to spend money)	5
Transportation safety (enhancing the safety of our transportation system)	4
Rebuilding infrastructure (maintaining and enhancing existing transportation system)	4
Highway capacity	3
Highway maintenance and operations	3
Expectations regarding personal mobility	3
Modal choice (Improving / expanding the transportation options for state residents and business)	2
Increased emphasis on corridor management (organizing planning around geographic corridors, such as Milwaukee – Chicago)	2
Corridor planning / finding congestion solutions (planning mobility, and increasing capacity within geographic corridors)	2
Serving the non-drivers	2
Environment / Land use concerns (need to preserve and maintain natural / social environments while expanding / enhancing transportation system)	2
Freight movement trends - all modes (increasing volumes; shifts modes / geography of traffic)	2
Coordinated land use (between uses such as transportation, retail, residential and the jurisdictions that manage them)	1
Increasing age of population (necessary enhancements to our transportation system needed to guarantee mobility of an aging population)	1
Security issues	1
Economic impact of transportation	--
Shifting away from dependency on automobile	--
How WisDOT works with local government (pre-project planning)	--
Increasing development pressure (managing the pressure to continually develop land)	--
Transportation congestion and delay	--

On a related issue, these WisDOT staff members also articulated what they believe would be the major changes occurring during the next 25 years that will impact transportation planning. Their list of issues includes the following:

- Reductions in gas tax revenue through shift away from gasoline (other fuel sources; increased fuel economy);
- Increase in truck and rail freight;

- Increase in congestion;
- Growth in tourism;
- Need to replace rapidly deteriorating infrastructure and lack of financial support for this;
- Difficulty preserving natural resources when faced with increasing development pressures;
- Need to expand passenger rail service;
- Need to introduce greater subsidies for rail (rather than air);
- Need for increased capacity;
- Growth in the mismatch between job locations and employee locations;
- Increasing urbanization;
- Aging population and impact on transportation;
- More multicultural issues and greater bilingual population;
- Impact of the virtual workforce (changing transportation need from workers tele-commuting);
- Determining how improvements will be funded;
- Possibility of something catastrophic occurring; and
- Impact of globalization.

3.3 Identifying Stakeholders

There were few surprises when participants identified either major stakeholders or underrepresented groups:

Fig. 3: Stakeholders Identified by WisDOT Focus Group

<i>Major Stakeholders</i>	<i>Underrepresented Groups</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Citizens▪ Legislature▪ Modal groups▪ Local government▪ Environmental groups▪ Business community▪ Other state agencies▪ Law enforcement▪ WisDOT▪ Developers▪ AARP▪ Owners of every mode▪ Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Minority groups▪ Disabled community▪ Non-drivers▪ Low income▪ Renters▪ Students

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Builders▪ Maintenance▪ Property owners▪ Planning organizations▪ Tourists	
--	--

There was, however, a great deal of discussion involving the need to employ non-traditional means to obtain input from underrepresented groups. Specifically, suggestions included going into communities where minority populations might be found and bringing the process to the people. This might, some said, involve setting up a table at a church or grocery store. Others suggested that to get meaningful input, the discussion would have to focus on the needs of the underrepresented groups rather than on transportation planning.

3.4 Implementation Issues and Barriers

WisDOT staff participants looked at a number of barriers to plan implementation. In this discussion they again addressed issues of jurisdiction. One participant gave this example:

“You have highways running through a community, but there are differing ideas on how the highway is meant to function. Does it carry people from Chicago to Green Bay? Or, does it serve the City of Milwaukee?”

Other considerations included:

- Size of the transportation budget (*“We don’t do anything around here that is cheap, whether it is a light rail system or the Marquette Interchange.”*);
- Concerns with whether WisDOT and Wisconsin are placing the right emphasis and the right investments in the right modes;
- Reality of the legislative process; and
- Challenge of working with special interest groups.

At the session’s end, the group was told to pretend they had been named “state transportation czar” and present three top recommendations to ensure effective transportation planning, policy development and appropriate investment in Wisconsin. Their recommendations were as follows:

Managing Expectations

- Clearly identify credible and justifiable needs;
- Have and promote reasonable expectations;
- Continually manage expectations by focusing on revenue;
- Make it clear to legislature and public that availability of resources will determine what is actually accomplished in the plan;

Ensure Stakeholder Involvement

- Ensure fair involvement from all stakeholders;
- Develop and implement a comprehensive public stakeholder involvement process;
- Depend on input from stakeholders to develop shared vision across modes;
- Dedicate resources to having an open and lengthy debate on vision and goals for transportation in Wisconsin, priorities and trade-offs and implementation;
- Focus on how transportation affects people's lives;

Structuring Plan / Process

- Ensure recommendations are data based;
- Provide outcomes as part of plan recommendations;
- Chart a 30-year course for each mode;
- Secure solid data;
- Create an independent board for plan or a blue ribbon committee; and
- Create series of recommendations that will be presented to legislature.

4.0 Session 2: External Stakeholder Focus Group Results

4.1 Major Findings and Observations

Eleven individuals participated in the October 14, 2002 Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) 2002 external stakeholder focus group. Participants in this group were opinion leaders. Their positions ranged from the acting director of a regional airport and the executive director of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) to the head of an environmental group and a dean at UW-Madison.

Like their counterparts who worked for WisDOT and participated in the earlier (October 9) session, these opinion leaders focused on the challenges in replacing an aging infrastructure and setting priorities for and funding transportation needs. Other major themes in this session included the following:

Highway / Automobile Dominance

- Developing more respect for means of transportation other than the automobile.

“The auto is the 900 pound gorilla.”

- Controlling the impact of “road builders” in the transportation decision-making process.
- Determining new ways to fund transportation needs and diminish subsidies for automobiles.

“Somehow you have to come up with a regional taxing mechanism that is not the property tax – have to have a dedicated tax for transportation.”

Coordinated Planning

- Developing a means to coordinate land use planning and transportation planning.

“All land use decisions are made outside of DOT, so it is difficult to incorporate this into planning.”

“Local plans shouldn’t be approved unless they have transportation related plans.”

“(We need) coordination of land use, planning and transportation, so that if you are building a new school, you look at these issues. Do pre-planning among communities.”

This group was also shown some Potential Alternative Structures (Appendix E) for demonstrating how transportation budgets might be presented. These included a version showing only current investments, another showing “total” needs for all modes and several showing a total budget with various funding levels for different modes. Although no final conclusions were reached, most felt that looking at the variations by modes was useful.

4.2 Changes Impacting Transportation

Both demographic and technological issues dominated the list of changes these leaders anticipate occurring during the next 25 years that will impact transportation in the state. They identified the top changes as the following:

- Aging of the population;
- Huge increases in freight traffic;
- Revenue challenges due to decreasing gas tax revenue (from increased fuel economy and switch in type of fuel);
- Increasing disconnect between location of employees and jobs;
- Technology making a 20 – 30 year planning cycle obsolete;
- Technology impacting safety (collision avoidance, etc.);
- Changing fuel types;
- Lack of professional and skilled workers;
- Increase in tourism in Wisconsin;
- Increasing volume of people traveling; and
- Need for more transportation choices.

Funding challenges and the age of (and expense of repairing) the current infrastructure dominated their discussion of “most critical issues” in transportation in Wisconsin. In this question, each participant was asked to offer three or four top issues. Then the group voted for the top two issues:

Fig. 4: Critical Issues as Identified by External Stakeholders

ISSUE	# Of Votes
Age of (and expense of maintaining) infrastructure	8
Funding challenges across modes and systems	6
Lack of real transportation choice	3
Need for safety improvements	3
Age of population (and corresponding mobility needs)	2
Environmental concerns (air quality, global warming, preserving natural resources)	1
Building capacity in minority community to participate in building and maintaining the infrastructure	1
Availability of public transportation to/from places of work	1
Linking workers to jobs	1
Congestion	1
Maximizing economic impact of transportation	1
Capacity of infrastructure	
Security	
Public acceptance of transit infrastructure expense	
Opportunities to participate in construction projects (building capacity and opportunity for Wisconsin workers – especially minorities – to participate in transportation related construction projects)	
Less density of population/population spread out	
Concerns about “other stuff” competing for public attention compared with transportation issues	
Non-property source of revenue for transit (at the local level)	
Allowing broad stakeholder participation	
Time of travel and reliability of particular modes	
Poor balance between short-term solutions (fixes) vs. finding long-term solutions (real)	

4.3 Stakeholders and Obtaining Input

As in the WisDOT staff session, there were few surprises offered in naming stakeholders. The list included:

- Road builders
- Students (go to school & universities)
- Modal users
- Auto users
- Agricultural community
- Non-auto
- Bikers
- Freight (truck, rail, air, water)

- Communities (aesthetic/economic): local government, chamber, community groups, alderman
- Employers
- System managers (professionals)
- Tourists

4.4 Challenges in Plan Development

Group members struggled with how to secure input from these groups and came up with few concrete suggestions. Instead, they offered a variety of observations and discussed key challenges relating to general planning and obtaining input from the public. These included:

- The focus must be on, *“What are the needs and aspirations that people have that can be addressed by transportation.”*
- There’s a lack of meaningful information about transportation or transportation costs. Outreach opportunities should be used first to educate groups about what transportation might be like, and then to get their input.
- *“The public has no idea about transportation costs. They need this to give meaningful input. They need to know how much roads cost, how much subsidizing each driver (costs), how much trains cost...”*
- The public doesn’t understand abstract transportation concepts. To get meaningful input, the emphasis must be on real projects and things that will have real impact on their lives.
- On one hand, many don’t care about issues on a state level and are more concerned with issues in their own communities. On the other hand, there is a danger in bringing discussions down to a community level because what people care about may be the minutia, like having speed bumps in their subdivisions.
- Whoever occupies the governor’s office must develop some type of vision for transportation in the state, and then have stakeholders react to this and modify the vision or plan. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation will probably have to take on this role for the governor.
- A 25-year planning window may be too long, particularly when many elected officials think in two or four-year time chunks and technology is changing so rapidly. Having the plan broken into five- or six-year time sections might be more feasible.
- *“Bring elected officials along”* on the process on an ongoing basis, *“not just hitting them three years from when things come to a vote.”*
- WisDOT already has a pro-automobile bias and really doesn’t care about public input.

4.5 Recommendations to Ensure Effective Planning

Finally, group members were asked to pretend they had been named “state transportation czar” and present three top recommendations to ensure effective transportation planning, policy development and appropriate investment in Wisconsin. Their recommendations were as follows:

Funding

- Implement a massive gas tax increase to fund a more multimodal approach;
- Broaden base for transportation funding in State (gradual transfer of auto-related sales tax monies into transportation sales fund);
- Implement sales tax for transportation in metro counties of certain size;
- Allocate a dedicated revenue stream to each mode;
- Move closer to user-fee system;
- Bring in funding beyond gas tax;

Politics

- Divorce politics from the planning process;
- Reform campaign finance laws to reduce special interest influence;
- Make it illegal for politicians to talk to planners;

Changing WisDOT

- Enact a policy limiting the “revolving door” (working for WisDOT, then for road builders then back to WisDOT);
- Infuse WisDOT with new people (still heavily engineering and highway department kind of place);

Planning Process Elements

- Create plan showing safety and economic ROI (return on investment);
- Decentralize planning to sub level – have area’s plan;
- Hold interdisciplinary transportation summit;
- Have inter-governmental committee planners;
- Ensure binding arbitration accountability – federal, state, city;
- Partner with local bodies;

- Update public regularly; and
- Evaluate employment and transportation barriers regularly (employer and employee perspective).

5.0 Appendix A: Participant Invitation Letter



Wisconsin Department of Transportation

www.dot.state.wi.us

Scott McCallum
Governor

Thomas E. Carlsen, P.E.
Acting Secretary

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Madison, WI 53707-7913

Telephone: 608-266-3661
FAX: 608-267-0441

<DATE>

<NAME>

<ORGANIZATION>

<ADDRESS>

<CSZ>

Dear [SAL.] [NAME]:

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation is embarking on a process to update its long-range transportation plan through the year 2030. The long-range plan will set forth a broad vision as well as strategies and programs for all the state's transportation modes: highways, rail, air, water, pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and local roads.

As a prelude to this planning process, we are interested in conducting a focus group to solicit your reactions and suggestions along with those of a select group of statewide opinion leaders with knowledge, wisdom and insights concerning transportation issues in Wisconsin. The purpose of this focus group is to:

- Learn about your views and perceptions of Wisconsin's transportation policies
- Determine perceived strengths and weaknesses of Wisconsin's transportation system
- Augment our current outreach / public involvement plan

We value your opinion on the future of Wisconsin's transportation system and would greatly appreciate your participation in this 1 ¼ hour focus group. No advance preparation is required.

We have enlisted the help of Tries & Rice, LLC, a Milwaukee-based public affairs firm, to conduct the focus groups. In the near future, a member of their staff may contact you to participate in a 90-minute lunchtime session in Madison on October 14. In the meantime, should you have any additional questions about the focus group or the long-range planning process, please contact Bobbi Retzlaff, Program & Planning Analyst at WisDOT by phone (608-264-7266) or email (bobbiretzlaff@dot.state.wi.us).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth J. Leonard".

Kenneth Leonard
Director for Bureau of Planning
Wisconsin Department of Transportation

OTM1 2002

6.0 Appendix B: Focus Group Participants

Focus Group #1: Internal WisDOT

- Ruben Anthony, Jr – Administrator, DTIM
- Ron Adam – Bureau Director, Rails and Harbors, DTID
- Rod Clark – Bureau Director, Transit and Local Roads, DTIM
- Carol Cutshall – Bureau Director, Environment, DTID
- Steve Coons – Airport Planner, Airport Program, Bureau of Aeronautics, DTID
- Ed Friede – Systems Planning & Operations Chief, District 2 (Milwaukee), DTD
- John Haverberg – Bureau Director, Highway Development, DTID
- Tanace Matthiesen – Section Chief, State and Local Policy Development, Office of Policy & Budget
- Mike Rewey – Systems Planning & Operations Chief, District 1 (Madison), DTD
- Bob St. Clair – Bureau Director, State Highway Programs, DTIM
- Daniel Yeh – DOT Program Officer, Office of Public Affairs

Focus Group #2: External Stakeholders

- Michele Carter – YWCA of Milwaukee
- Dave Cieslewicz – Exec. Director, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin
- Phil Evenson – Exec. Director, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC)
- Dave Jensen – Acting Airport Director, Dane County Regional Airport
- Richard Jones – Commissioner of Public Works, City of Racine
- David Mann – Airport Director, John H. Batten Airport
- Mary K. Rouse – Dean, University of Wisconsin - Madison
- Greg Seubert – Manager, Wausau Area Transit System
- Ernie Stetenfeld – V.P.- Public & Govt. Relations, AAA of Wisconsin
- Dan Thompson – Exec. Director, League of WI Municipalities
- Ernie Wittwer – Director, Midwest Regional UTC

7.0 Appendix C: Discussion Guide for WisDOT Focus Group

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOCUS GROUP AGENCY PERSONNEL

INTRODUCTION: Explain objectives of the session, role of independent moderator, audio taping, how data will be used, group rules for participants, etc.

1. *(Intro)* I'd like to begin with some brief introductions so that I can get to know all of you in the group. Let's go around the table for this. Please give me your **name, your position and your primary responsibility** at WisDOT. *(Icebreaker)* Then please share one fascinating fact about yourself that the rest of the group does not likely know.

We're here this afternoon to discuss some aspects of the planning process. We are seeking your ideas on both what should be included in the development of Connections 2030, as well as how to make this planning process most effective. Our objective is to get your ideas on how to:

- Ensure that public involvement is maximized;
- That both major and minor stakeholders are heard;
- That cooperation between various levels of government and interest groups are balanced; and
- That emerging trends and issues are identified.

It is a tall order. We're holding this session, set aside from a regular meeting, so that you'll have a chance to think both inside and outside of the box. And to share ideas with each other.

2. I'd like to begin our discussion with a rather broad issue. It is: what changes do you anticipate occurring during the next twenty-five years that will impact transportation in Wisconsin?
3. *(B PRIORITY)* In 1994, WisDOT produced Translinks 21. In what ways was the plan on target? In what ways did it fail to address key issues? (PROBE: What about the "process" of developing that plan? Was it effective?) (Note: Many were not around while Translinks was being developed.)
4. Let's return our focus to the present and future. **What are the most critical issues in transportation in Wisconsin?** Since this is such a broad topic, I'd like you to identify what you believe are the top 5 issues and write these down. Then, we'll discuss your ideas. (Put on easel and discuss.)
5. We've developed a broad list. I'd like to see if we could get some consensus and what the Top 10 priorities issues might be.

6. We discussed the major issues and trends, but I'm sure there are other issues that should have focus in this plan. For example, are there certain **transportation modes** that should be emphasized?
7. Are there **regional or district issues** that, while not statewide, should be flagged for consideration? What are some of these?
8. Let's switch our focus to **stakeholders**. Who, in your opinion, are the major stakeholders for the 2030 Plan? (PROBE: Are any of these different than those identified in the modal plans?)
9. (*B PRIORITY*) Are there any **additional underrepresented groups**, whose voices should be heard in this process?
10. What is the best **way to get input** from the main stakeholders? (**NOTE:** We would probably develop a grid on the easel and put stakeholder groups and "Means of participation.")
11. (*B PRIORITY*) What about the underrepresented groups? What is the best way to obtain their input? (PROBE: Are these different from what we discussed previously? How do we make these underrepresented groups **aware** that a planning process is being initiated?) How might the Internet be used?
12. (*B PRIORITY*) How can WisDOT balance the interests of local governments and the state?
13. Let's switch our focus to the **process of developing a plan**. In your opinion, what are some of the major challenges you and WisDOT face in the planning process?
14. (*B PRIORITY*) What might be learned from the process of developing Translinks 21?
15. What steps can be taken to ensure that the plan focuses on inter- and multi-modal regional transportation solutions and **keeps narrow interests or tunnel vision from dominating the process**?
16. (*B PRIORITY--OPTIONAL*) To some extent, effective planning may require taking into consideration a region bigger than the state. (GIVE EXAMPLE). How can this perspective be incorporated into the planning process?
17. Cooperation between various agencies, groups or levels of government is likely an important part of an effective planning process. What can be done to encourage a high level of cooperation?
18. What about issues within WisDOT? Are there barriers here, organizationally or otherwise, that may impede effective planning?
19. I'd like to spend a little time on **plan implementation**. What are some of the **political barriers** to effectively implementing a transportation plan? (**PROBE – OR USE LAST QUESTION (Q 24) INSTEAD:** Also, what can be done to make sure the plan is implemented? Are there follow-up activities needed within WisDOT to make sure policy decisions made during the planning process actually get integrated into everyday departmental processes and decision-making?)
20. What about **funding** barriers? How do you create a plan with fiscal constraints or that has a realistic dollar amount attached to it?

21. And **geographic** barriers?
22. What can WisDOT do now and in the near future to **overcome** some of these barriers?
23. In the few minutes we have left, I'd like you to assume that you've just been named **Czar of WisDOT**. In your first act as czar, you're conducting a major press conference to address **your 3 top recommendations that will ensure effective transportation planning, policy develop and investment in Wisconsin**. I'd like to go around the table and ask what your top suggestions are going to be.
24. One final question. If you were still Czar of WisDOT, what **2 recommendations would you make to ensure that this plan, along with key policy decisions, is implemented?**

8.0 Appendix D: Discussion Guide for External Stakeholder Focus Group

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOCUS GROUP Opinion Leaders

INTRODUCTION: Explain objectives of the session, role of independent moderator, audio taping, how data will be used, and group rules for participants, etc.

1. *(Intro)* I'd like to begin with some brief introductions so that we can get to know each other and work as a group. Let's go around the table for this. Please give me your **name, where you are from, and what you do or what constituency you represent.** *(Icebreaker)*

We're here this afternoon to discuss some aspects of the planning process. We are seeking your ideas on both what should be included in the development of Connections 2030, the state's multimodal transportation plan, as well as how to make this planning process most effective. Our objective is to get your ideas on how to:

- Ensure that public involvement is maximized;
- That both major and minor stakeholders are heard;
- That cooperation between various levels of government and interest groups are balanced; and
- That emerging trends and issues are identified.

It is a tall order. But, you've been identified as our "intelligentsia group." So, I'm hopeful you'll be able to share your perspectives as well as move beyond your own constituency to help us explore the bigger issues involved in this process. We hope this session will provide a chance to think both inside and outside of the box. And to share ideas with each other. Does anyone have any questions?

2. I'd like to begin our discussion with a rather broad issue. It is: what **changes do you anticipate occurring during the next 25 years that will impact transportation in Wisconsin?** **(PROBE:** And, how might these changes impact the area or areas where **you have specific interest and concerns?)**
3. If you had to identify **the most critical issues in transportation in Wisconsin**, what would you say these are? Since this is such a broad topic, I'd like you to identify what you believe are the Top 5 issues and write these down. Then, we'll discuss your ideas. (Put on easel and discuss.)
4. I'm going to pass out a list of critical issues that was developed in a focus group we held on this topic last week. **(PASS OUT LIST)** Please look over this list and see if you would like to add any of these topics to the ones listed on the easel.

5. We've developed a broad list. I'd like to see if we could get some consensus and what the **Top priorities** issues might be. To do this I'd like you to vote for up to 3 of the issues identified. (NOTE: you may give only one vote to an issue, and you may vote for one of your own priorities. If you feel there are less than 3 top issues, vote only for those you feel are top priorities.)
6. We discussed the major issues and trends, but I'm sure there are other issues that should have focus in this plan. For example, are there certain **transportation modes** that should be emphasized?
7. (*B PRIORITY*) Are there **regional or district issues** that, while not statewide, should be flagged for consideration? What are some of these?
8. Are there **other topics** that we have not discussed that should be included in planning discussions?
9. (*B PRIORITY*) Let's switch our focus to **stakeholders**. Who, in your opinion, are the major stakeholders for the 2030 Plan?
10. (*B PRIORITY*) What is the best **way to get input** from the main stakeholders? (NOTE: We would probably develop a grid on the easel and put stakeholder groups and "Means of participation.")
11. How might **newer technology, including the Internet**, be used? Are there other channels or vehicles that WisDOT should emphasize?
12. Let's switch our focus to the process of **developing a plan**. In your opinion, what are some of the **major challenges WisDOT will face in the planning process**?
13. Cooperation between various agencies, groups or levels of government is likely an important part of an effective planning process. What might **impede this cooperation**?
14. What can be done to **encourage a high level of cooperation**?
15. The plan itself -- what is actually included financially, what it looks like -- is another issue. In your opinion, how should this plan be structured? What should the final plan look like so that it can actually be implemented?
16. Let's look at what some hypothetical alternative structures of this plan might be. In the past, the WisDOT has had plans that perhaps fell into three categories of funding. We'll call these "small" (basically funding remains as it has been), "Large" (funding of total needs) and "medium" which might be somewhere in between. Another approach might be to keep funding levels the same, but alter the mix. I'm going to pass out a graphic that illustrates this. I'd like to get your reaction. (PASS OUT COLOR "POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES.")
17. I'd like to spend a little time on **plan implementation**. What are some of the **barriers** to effectively implementing a transportation plan? Let's put these in categories (on easel):
 - Political
 - Funding
 - Geographic

- Other

18. What can WisDOT do now and in the near future to **overcome** some of these barriers?
19. In the few minutes we have left, I'd like you to assume that you've just been named **Czar of WisDOT**. In your first act as czar, you're conducting a major press conference to address your **3 top recommendations that will ensure effective transportation planning along with the appropriate policy direction and investment strategies in Wisconsin for the 2030 Plan**. I'd like to go around the table and ask what your top suggestions are going to be.
20. Do you have any additional comments or recommendations?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION.

9.0 Appendix E: Potential Alternative Structures Handout

